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issue 51, volume 82 www.newbuffalotimes.com Thursday, December 21, 2023

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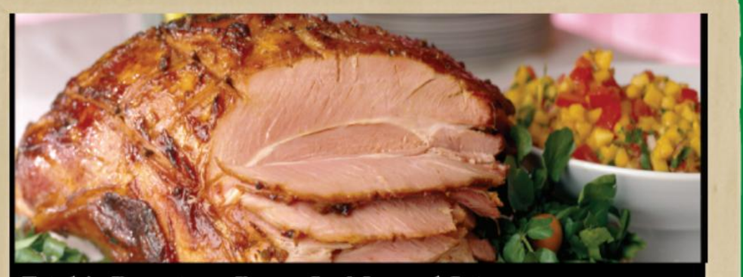

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Periodical Postage paid in
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PO BOX 369, New Buffalo, MI 49117

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PUBLICATION NUMBER 377960
CIRCULATION 5,000+ WEEKLY

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Three Oaks Village Council accepts Ream's resignation

BY THERESE DONNELLY

The Three Oaks Village Council bid a reluctant farewell to one of its members during their Wednesday, Dec. 13 meeting, as they accepted the formal resignation of councilmember Tyler Ream.

Ream, who was elected in 2020, informed the rest of the council at their November meeting that he was moving out of the village, which will disqualify him from serving.

Village president Richard Smith thanked Ream for his work, saying, "You have been a wonderful council member and you've done so much for the village."

Councilmembers Joe Hinman and Jason Niemzyk both said Ream was the one who convinced them to run for council.

No one has been announced to complete Ream's term, ending in November 2024.

During the December meeting, the council also went into closed session. Upon reconvening the meeting, the council accepted Tyler Prenkert's resignation from the Three Oaks Police Department and approved a motion to terminate an agreement to support planned law enforcement training with Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards.

Later in the meeting, police chief Carl Krause showed the council the new sensory bags the police department will begin using to help interact with neurodivergent individuals. Krause said the bags had been created with input from the Berrien Regional Education Service Agency and include noise-cancelling headphones, fidget toys and illustrations to help nonverbal people communicate.

Krause said the bags are similar to Carter Kits, which contain items to help calm people with sensory needs in emergency situations.

Andrew Rudd of Wightman and Associates engineers gave the council an update on planned updates to the village water treatment system.

Rudd explained under state guidelines that the village will need to submit a plan for review in February and then make any revisions and go out for bid, with a tentative award date of July 8.

"It's pretty quick," Rudd told the council, "But I'm confident if we stay vigilant, we'll get there."

Part of the upcoming work includes soil borings. Councilmember Lois Jones noted the village had paid for borings not too long ago, but Rudd explained the new borings were required by the state.

In a separate action, the council accepted a bid from Dudiak Tree Service for tree removal around Well 5 at the treatment plant. Councilmember Jason Niemzyk noted Derek Dudiak has often volunteered time and services to the village.

The council also approved a bid from Art and Image to create decals for a newly purchased Department of Public Works vehicle.

Looking ahead to the new year, the council approved the 2024 events schedule. New this year is a planned block party on South Elm Street June 22. In addition to approving the date, the council approved a street closure for the event.

Earlier in the year the village issued notices for anyone with property stored at the former Lions Club building at Watkins Park to claim their items. Now officials will identify any remaining items that can be used by village departments.

Faulkner said no decision has been made on the future of the building, but several ideas have been mentioned, including using the space for a day care.

Ed White's term on the Parks and Recreation Board expired in November. The Council discussed reappointing him to a new term, but tabled the matter in order to verify White was interested in serving.

Prior to the Council adjourning, Niemzyk announced a professor from Texas A&M University is filming a documentary on Three Oaks' Flag Day parade and will be filming and conducting interviews

All the good are friends of one another.
— Zeno of Citium

COL acquires property in Niles Charter Township

Chikaming Open Lands (COL) officially acquired a new nature preserve in Niles Charter Township Friday, Dec. 8.

The 40-acre forested property is adjacent to another protected natural area, Trillium Ravine Plant Preserve, which is owned and managed by Michigan Nature Association.

Located on Riverside Road a few miles northwest of downtown Niles, the new property will be named Trillium Woodlands Preserve and will be open to the public for outdoor recreation.

"With its high-quality forest and wetland areas, as well as the abundant spring wildflowers that give the preserve its name, this is a really spectacular property," said COL Executive Director Ryan Postema.

"One of our priorities as an organization is to increase our impact by expanding our conservation efforts to the eastern reaches of Berrien County. That gave us all the more reason to jump at the opportunity to preserve it," he added.

Trillium Woodlands Preserve is COL's first nature preserve in Niles Charter Township. COL expects to develop a trail system through the preserve in the next year, to expand and connect with the existing trail loop in the adjoining Trillium Ravine Plant Preserve. Other future plans will include the construction of a gravel parking area to provide improved access to the Preserves and installation of trail signage and markers.

COL said to stay tuned for more updates (and plenty of trillium come spring). — STAFF REPORTS

Local Government Meetings

New Buffalo Times

Democracy Requires Transparency

CITY OF NEW BUFFALO
JOHN HUMPHREY, MAYOR
CITY COUNCIL
MARK ROBERTSON, ROGER LIJESKI, JOHN HUMPHREY, BRIAN FLANAGAN, VANCE PRICE
City Council meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 6:30PM
CITY OF NEW BUFFALO PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP BOARD
PETE RAHM, MICHELLE HEIT, JUDY H. ZABICKI, PATTY IAZZETTO, JACK ROGERS
Board meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at 4PM
NEW BUFFALO TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30PM
SHERIFF BERRIEN COUNTY
L. Paul Bailey, Sheriff
Chuck Heit, Undersheriff
NEW BUFFALO AREA RECREATIONAL AUTHORITY
Meets at 10AM on the 2nd Wednesday of every other month (odd) at New Buffalo Township Hall, 17425 Red Arrow Highway New Buffalo
NEW BUFFALO AREA SCHOOLS BOARD
LISA WERNER, JOHN HASKINS, DENISE CHURCHILL, BRADLEY BURNER, VANESSA THUN, STEPHEN DONNELLY, GREG VOSBERG
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP BOARD
DAVID BUNTE, PAULA DUDIAK, LIZ RETTIG, RICHARD SULLIVAN, BILL MARSKE
Chikaming Board meets on the 2nd Thursday of each month at 6:30PM
CHIKAMING TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION
Meets on the 1st Wednesday of each month at 6:30PM
THREE OAKS
THREE OAKS TOWNSHIP BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Monday of each month at 7PM

VILLAGE OF THREE OAKS BOARD
Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
GRAND BEACH
Meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7PM
MARY ROBERTSON, CLERK
HARRY WALDER BLAKE O'HALLORAN, JAMES BRACEWELL, PETER DOERR, EDWARD BRANDES

MICHIANA
VILLAGE OF MICHIANA COUNCIL
Meets on the 2nd Friday of each month at 1PM

New Buffalo City Council discusses SLU for dispensary in the township

BY THERESE DONNELLY

A decision on a marijuana dispensary in New Buffalo Township may mean legal action for the City of New Buffalo.

At their Dec. 18 meeting, the New Buffalo Township Board granted preliminary approval for a Special Land Use for an adult use marihuana retail establishment, Mint New Buffalo, LLC, at 18300 US 12, which is a property adjacent to several city residential properties.

Later that same evening, at the New Buffalo City Council's regular meeting, mayor John Humphrey stated the board's decision was in violation of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. He said the board had approved the application as it would be located on an R1/R2 property; however, he said adjacent property owners in the city should have been informed of the proposed SLU and asked to provide waivers before the application was approved.

"An invisible line should not define how we conduct public policy," he said.

Humphrey said the city may sue the township to follow fair process, though councilmember Mark Robertson said the city should discuss the issue with the city attorney before taking any action.

The council also discussed, but took no action on, fees associated with long-term rental properties. Nancy and Bob Gino, owners of a group of apartment units on East Clay Street, told the council in two years they had paid more than $7,400 in registration, inspection and administrative fees for their 16 units.

Humphrey agreed the costs were excessive and explained the inspection fees were put into place to ensure health and safety were preserved, but the charges would be discussed.

After the meeting, Gino said she was happy with the response from the council.

The council approved a redevelopment liquor license for Postboy, a restaurant going in at 207 N. Whittaker Street. City manager Darwin Watson explained to the council that the owners were unable to obtain a regular license; however, Michigan law allows a municipality to pass a resolution approving an applicant for an on-premise license in a redevelopment area, such as New Buffalo's Downtown Development Authority, if it meets certain criteria.

Third Coast Kayak and Paddleboard's concession agreement with the city is set to expire, so the council reviewed a proposal from Third Coast owner Ryan Gerard for a new contract. Gerard proposed a seven-year contract, with the city's commission reduced from 20 percent to 17 percent, and permission to move the current storage unit and a new shed to a location near the water.

When asked by the council for further explanation, Gerard said moving the shed would free up public parking spaces and reduce wear caused by kayaks being dragged along the ground. He said the requested reduction in commission was due to the business dealing with inflation and increased prices. However, he said he had been doing business with the city since 2005 and would not push the reduced commission if it jeopardized that relationship.

Humphrey said he was concerned the proposed timeframe would allow other vendors to use it as precedence. He instead proposed a four-year contract.

The council approved the appointment of Mick Lantis to the Board of Review. Humphrey said Lantis will replace Bill McCollum, who has a conflict of interest.

The council also approved the reappointment of Vanessa Thun and Jack Kennedy to the Board of Review. Watson also recommended Edward Evans to the board, but Humphrey said he would like to table Evans' appointment until the council could learn his qualifications and ensure he understood what was required of board members.

No action was taken on the city's solid waste removal contract. Watson said the city attorney had not been able to provide documents for review before the December meeting. He said once documents are available, the city will provide them to Lakeshore Recycling and Disposal.

At a previous meeting the council had chosen to remove commercial pickup from the city contract. Humphrey said many commercial sites, especially restaurants, require several pickups per week in the summer, and some of the condominium complexes had time-consuming bin arrangements that took an excessive amount of time.

Property owner Deb Schmidt told the council she had prepaid for rubbish removal at her property for the upcoming quarter and asked how payments will be handled if the city comes out with a commercial contract. Humphrey said the city won't be able to determine that until it has negotiated with Lakeshore. Joshua Workman of Lakeshore said the company will honor any existing contracts.

Prior to adjournment, Humphrey announced the city had won the appeal regarding a short-term rental lawsuit. He said he expected further action, but was confident the city would win.

Power has no limits. — *Tiberius*

Locally shot films spotlighted at 'Made in Three Oaks'

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Guests to The Vickers Theatre's "Made in Three Oaks" event in Three Oaks Sunday, Dec. 17, spotted various local haunts when viewing Kyle Misak's latest short films.

A man and a woman, who are outfitted in 1950s ensembles, meet on a rainy night against a backdrop that contains Three Oaks' The Acorn Center for the Performing Arts' glowing yellow sign in it in "The Acorn." In "Autumn Girl,"a young boy rides his bikes down winding country roads until he arrives at a towering green building that houses a turn-of-the-century soda shop: Doc's Soda Fountain at Hesston Steam Museum in Hesston, Indiana.

Misak, who wrote and directed both films through his company, Throwback Pictures Productions, said that "The Acorn" was shot in Three Oaks. "Autumn Girl," which was a Cannes International Independent Film Festival CIIFF 2021 Grand Prize Winner (International Short Film), was also shot in Three Oaks but mainly in Buchanan

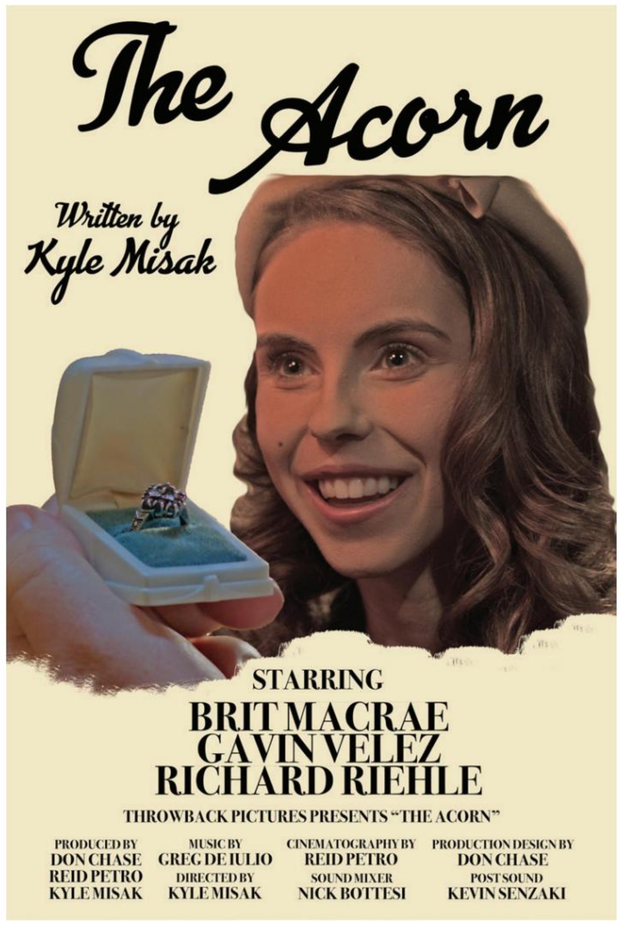
While he hails from the Mattawan, Kalamazoo area, he said that Don Chase, the production designer and producer for both films, lives around Three Oaks.

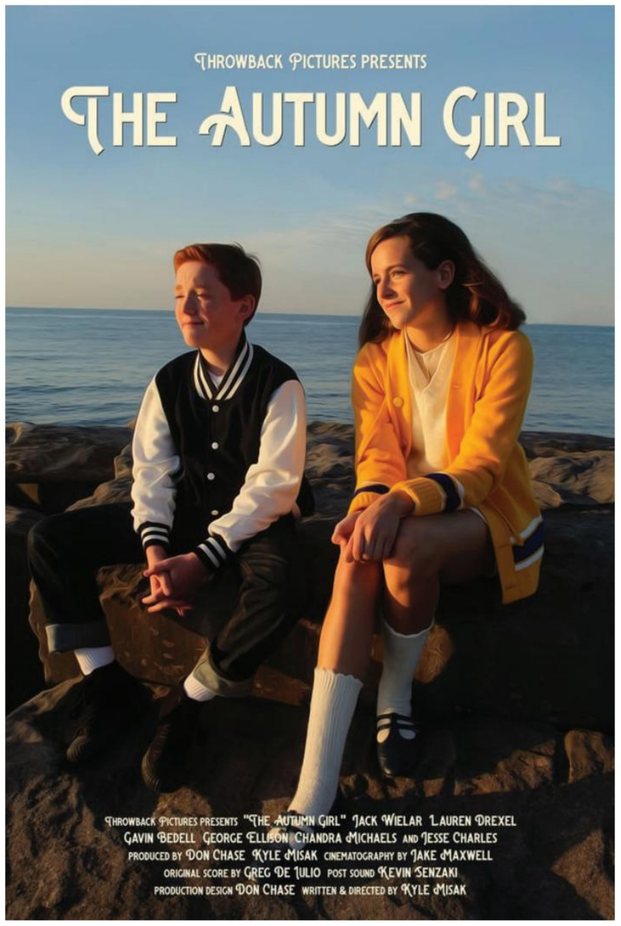
"Three Oaks is super quaint and very classic Midwestern looking and a lot of the stories I tend to write and tell kind of take place in backdrops like that...I like shooting around here with Don and a lot of people around here are super nice and very accommodating to us being down here shooting movies, so it's just a very fun time," he said.

It's a setting that caters to period pieces, which are the types of films that Misak most relishes creating.

"I just think it looks more cinematic when things are in a different era," he said.

Kyle Misak (right) discusses his films with Don Chase at The Vickers Theatre




THROWBACK PICTURES PRESENTS
THE AUTUMN GIRL
THROWBACK PICTURES PRESENTS "THE AUTUMN GIRL" JACK WIELAR LAUREN DREXEL
GAVIN BEDELL GEORGE ELLISON CHANDRA MICHAELS AND JESSE CHARLES
PRODUCED BY DON CHASE KYLE MISAK CINEMATOGRAPHY BY JAKE MAXWELL
ORIGINAL SCORE BY GREG DE IULIO POST SOUND KEVIN SENZAKI
PRODUCTION DESIGN DON CHASE WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY KYLE MISAK

Chase said that costumes for "The Acorn" were found at a couple costume shops in Baroda and on Ebay for "Autumn Girl." An antique store located on Shawnee Road also contained several vintage costumes.

Ensuring the setting for each film matched the time period was more challenging, though.

"With 'The Autumn Girl,' it was kind of tricky because we wanted to show a town and stuff but we didn't want it to appear to be modern, so we found the back alley in Buchanan - we knew a lot of people from a music video we shot that had classic cars and we just kind of reached out to them and got as many as we could and staged the streets to sell the era," Chase said.

Each film took about five days to shoot, Misak said.

A self-taught director who's been pursuing writing and directing films since high school, Misak does video production at Valley Farm Church in Kalamazoo.

He's written and directed over 20 films, three of which are feature length.

"Don and I have been doing stuff together for 10 years now - we just kind of started off making a lot of not so good stuff...We just kind of learned and grew over time," Misak said.

A feature length film, "Bad Haircut," is in post production and should come out sometime in early 2025.

Misak shot the film in Galesburg, Michigan, Mattawan and Baroda and Logansport, Indiana, over the summer and early fall and worked on it over the last couple of years with Chase, producer John Petro and another producer, Jesse Charles.

More on Misak's films can be found at www.kylemisak.com.

New Buffalo Township Board accepts clerk's resignation, appoints Hannon as interim clerk

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the New Buffalo Township Board of Trustees accepted the resignation of clerk Judith Zabicki, as well as approved deputy clerk Michelle Hannon serving as interim clerk, at their Monday, Dec. 18, meeting.

Both Zabicki's resignation and Hannon's appointment will go into effect Jan. 1.

Township supervisor Michelle Heit said that Zabicki served the township for just under 11 years, which included its "leaner years."

"We appreciate everything she's done for the township," Heit said.

Heit said that Hannon filled in as clerk in the summer.

She was also approved to fill Zabicki's place on the Pine Grove Cemetery Board.

Board members approved a monthly stipend of $500, plus $20 per hour on days with elections in the township, for deputy clerk Judy Flick effective Jan. 1.

Preliminary approval of SLUs were given to the following adult use marihuana retail establishments: J. Elias Management, Inc. (Puff) at 10227 U.S. Highway 12; Accelerate Green, Inc. (High Society) at 19189 U.S. Highway 12, with the condition of there being no possibility of onsite consumption due to the lot being split and the existing foundation having been removed and returned to grade and that rentals must follow the township's permitting process; Mint New Buffalo, LLC at 18300 U.S. Highway 12; Weber Family Ventures, LLC, on the condition of a written reportable agreement for parking on the parcel on the approved site plan; Simple AG New Buffalo LLC (Supergood) at Harbor Country Drive Exit One and Michigan Pure Green at 19215 U.S. Highway 12, with the condition that the necessary EAGLE permit is obtained and any required environmental review is completed.

With regards to Mint New Buffalo, LLC, New Buffalo Mayor John Humphrey said the New Buffalo Township Planning Commission had denied their SLU.

He added that Estelle Brinkman, zoning administrator, had said that the ordinance doesn't "specify that the residential requirements for R-1 be located strictly in the township" and that there was an "invisible line there and they could approve it."

Humphrey said that the ordinance specifically says "within the township," which is the basis for Mint's appeal; however, per the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, there would have to be a second meeting if the commission was going to appeal it, which didn't occur, and the residents would "need to be informed again, everyone within 150 feet, because your zoning administrator cannot unilaterally overrule the Planning Commission and bring this for board approval with you guys tonight."

Per the zoning ordinance, Humphrey said that "any provisioning center within 150 feet of an existing one-family or multiple family dwelling is prohibited unless the owner of that dwelling completes an application for a waiver as part of the special use land process and records the waiver with the Berrien County Register of Deeds."

"By fact, what should happen under the appeal here for Mint is they should have gone to all these people, asked for waivers and those waivers would've been registered and then you would have another meeting and the Planning Commission would vote again on whether to approve or disapprove this special land use," Humphrey said.

Berrett Young , who was representing Mint, said that the ordinance "does specifically say within the township." Despite being neighbors, the city and township are two different municipalities, he said.

"The zoning administrator did correctly conclude that my client's application satisfied all of this municipality's, the township's, requirements and so just because the city, a different municipality, may have a different perspective, that's not sufficient to override the text of the zoning ordinance itself," he said.

New Buffalo Township Supervisor Michelle Heit said that everything comes to the township board for final approval.

According to Brinkman and Wightman and Associates, Mint did meet all the criteria, she said.

The township's attorney said that the ordinance states that a "facility or establishment may not be on a parcel that abuts R-1, R-2, AG-R or MR zoning districts within the township" and that "for purposes of this subsection, a parcel does not abut a zoning district if a railroad or state highway separates a parcel from a zoning district."

Heit said that there were three public hearings, with at least two between the commission and board.

"No one came to those meetings to say, 'Don't include that parcel, since it abuts the city ' - it was discussed as a group and we decided to move forward," Heit said.

Board members approved the resignation of Dan Handley, effective immediately, as township representative on the New Buffalo Area Recreational Authority and for Chuck Heit to fill his place.

Board members supported continuing the exploration of the regionalization of fire services.

Heit said that chiefs from four municipalities - Chikaming Township, Three Oaks Township, New Buffalo Township and the City of New Buffalo - had met to discuss the potential regionalization.

She said that it's becoming "more and more difficult" to find volunteer firefighters, especially people who can leave their places of work during the day.

Heit said that the regionalization may involve a fire authority or district.

Fire chief Jamie Flick said that they have the support of the members of the fire departments.

"It's needed - at some point in time, I think it's going to be where all the departments are going to end up," he said.

Board members approved a Broadband Subrecipient Agreement with Midwest Energy and Communications (MEC), which includes a local match of $160,650 in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Heit said there are 158 parcels in the township that will get broadband. More parcels will be addressed that are west of 1-94, as the county will be putting out an RFP soon to address them.

The township has $206,000 in ARPA funds that it's committed to broadband. Lowering the amount to $106,650 dedicates $675 per parcel, which is what the county is matching.

Work on broadband expansion should begin in the second quarter of 2025.

The following reappointments were approved: Chuck Baran to the Corridor Improvement Authority with a term expiring Dec. 31, 2027; Vern Levine, Steve Evans and Mary Nykamp to the Construction Board of Appeals with terms expiring Dec. 31, 2025, and Shawn Armstrong to the Planning Commission for a term expiring Dec. 31, 2026.

Deb Wagner was appointed to the Planning Commission for a term expiring Dec. 31, 2026, and Alex Keen was appointed as an alternate representative to the Galien River Sanitary District.

The purchase of 300 Sensus radio read water meters from Etna Supply for $58,500 was approved.

Grand Beach Village Council hears concerns regarding new address signs

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Residents of the Village of Grand Beach had concerns about the house address signs that were approved at the village council's last meeting at their Wednesday, Dec. 13, meeting.

Council members approved the bulk purchase of black and white signs and that homeowners be charged $50 on the water bill and new construction homes paying $100 before being issued an occupancy permit to recoup the signs' fee and installation.

A letter had been sent out earlier to homeowners to make them aware of the ordinance that requires house numbers; however, house numbers had not been added or moved to the correct street.

Councilmember and police commissioner Ed Brandes said that they're "processing" the feedback received on the sign requirement.

"Our fundamental rule here is if you were in compliance before, we're not going to charge you $50, we'll refund you - but if you're not in compliance yet, that's going to be a problem," he said.

Council president Harry Walder said he's seen some communication with regards to what the council did being "improper, given the ordinance." He's reached out to village attorney Sara Senica to see if what the council approved is correct.

"If we didn't do it right, shame on us, we'll undo it - but if we did do it right, we won't undo it," he said.

Barbara Kucharski asked why she received a bill if FedEx, police and ambulance have not had any trouble finding her house with the sign she's had on top of her garage for 47 years.

Tim Johnson asked if anyone has been ticketed about not having the appropriate numbers on their houses, which is the ordinance that the village has today.

He also asked how many people have been notified about not being in compliance.

"I ask that we slow down and we follow the procedure of amending the existing ordinance - I think that really has to happen first, you need to identify who's not in compliance and communicate that before any action is taken," he said.

"Our fundamental rule here is if you were in compliance before, we're not going to charge you $50, we'll refund you - but if you're not in compliance yet, that's going to be a problem," he said.

Johnson asks where posts will be placed on a lot of homes in the old Grand Beach neighborhood, where sometimes the entire yard is all parking.

Angie Trainor said that the letter sent to residents said the village is "trying to create a conformed way of viewing properties where it's the same at each property;" however, Grand Beach is not set up that way, she said, as the mailboxes are in different areas and lots are different shapes and sizes.

Police chief Ryan Layman said that the vertical, double-sided, reflective signs that were ordered are in compliance with the village's ordinance and will be put in the village's right of way, not the homeowners' property.

With regards to where the signs will go, he said that he's "totally open to working with everyone."

Councilmembers approved ELD constructing a platform at the Pine Avenue Beach Access at an amount not to exceed $38,288, with John Larkin donating $5,000 toward the viewing platform based on the council's assurances that the handrail will be glass, that there will be white posts 6 feet apart and the glass will be in between and there will be no top rail, so someone will be able to see right through it.

At the last meeting, Larkin had suggested neighbors make possible monetary donations to change the project to prevent lake views from being obstructed. Council members discussed different possibilities, such as using clear panels instead of wooden planks for the safety railing.

Walder said that Sheila McGuiness has volunteered to serve on a charter commission, which would look at possibly revising the village's charter, and that he'll be bringing her and anyone else who steps up for formal approval next month. The commission will report to the council.

Walder drew attention to a draft map from Abonmarche with regards to the Marquette Greenway and bicycles entering and exiting the village onto U.S. Highway 12.

The draft map shows an updated design of the bike path from Grand Beach Road over the railroad track to the highway, with Walder noting that the bike paths have been widened and moved a little further out, so the roadway is now 12 feet drive lanes instead of 10. The map, which hasn't been approved yet, is on the village's website.

Councilmembers approved a Social Club contract, which contains a two-year calendar and a contract amount of $4,500 per year.

Council member James Bracewell noted the "aggressive jump" in the increase from $2,500 to $4,500 a year; however, Alex Bialk said that the amount hasn't been changed since 2007.

Councilmembers amended Ordinance 2006-01 to address updated floodplain management maps effective April 25, 2024, as well as adopted an ordinance that will, per the its official language, "define and adopt flood hazard area permit requirements, provide for the review of applications in flood hazard areas, requirements for flood elevation data" and will "recognize areas of special flood hazard identified by the federal emergency management agency."

Councilmembers approved an increase in clerk/treasurer Kim Wolnik's salary to $5,000 a year.

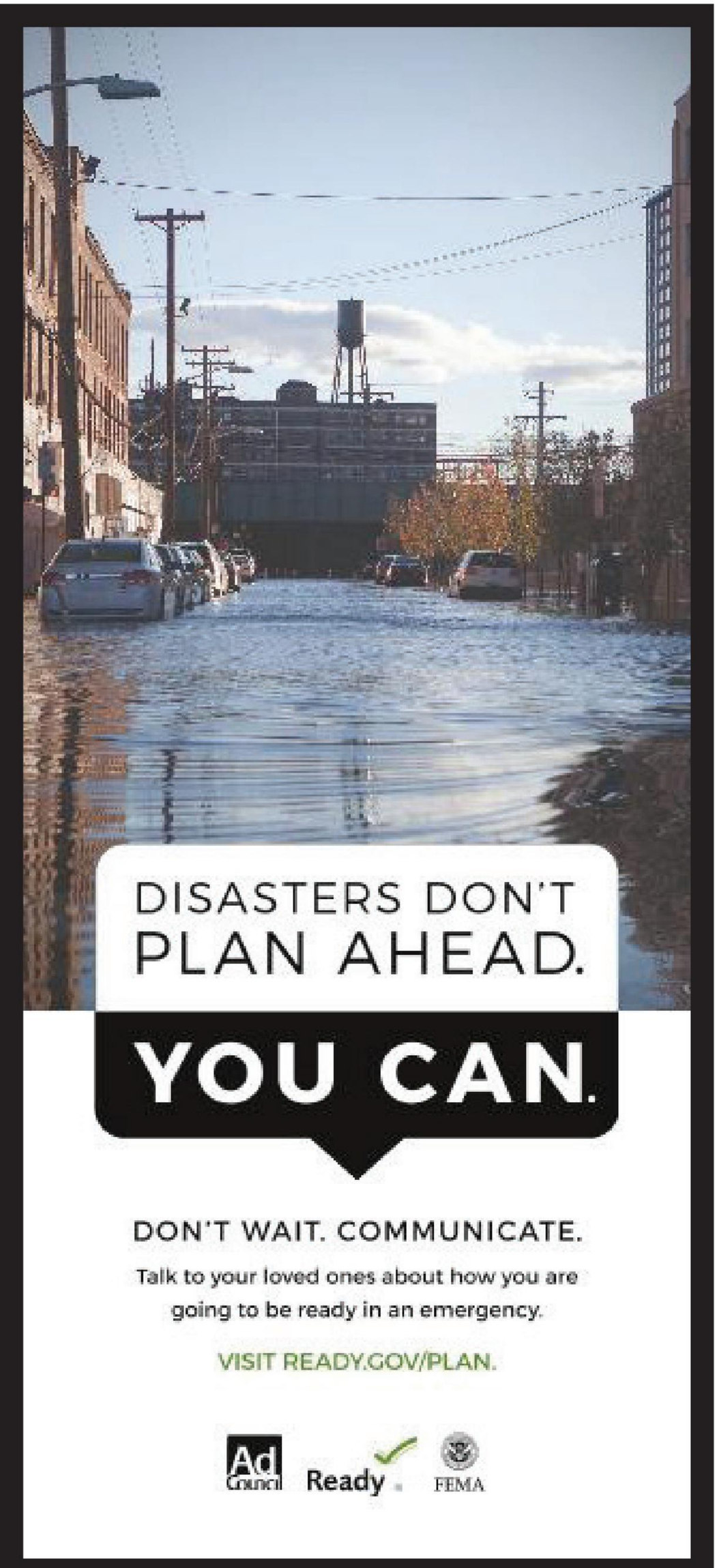
In a 4-1 motion, with Bracewell voting "nay," council members approved the purchase of a 75-inch television, which will be used by Walder and building inspector Chad Butler for looking at drawings, for an amount not to exceed $700.

An increase in the pool permit fee and zoning fee to match the building permit fee, was approved. The building fee is 1% and the building/zoning permit fee is $250.

Councilmembers approved Kramer Tree Service to remove a dead tree at the village archway for $4,200.

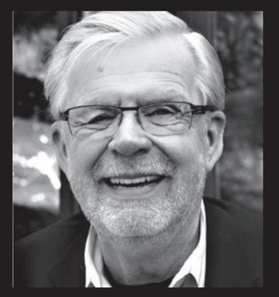
Councilmembers approved the Planning Commission's annual report.

Councilmembers approved a resolution to opt out of Public Act 152 of 2011.



SPORTS

From the Bleachers



COLUMN BY KURT MARGGRAF IN CHICAGO

Here we are, the week before Christmas.

The Cubs, Sox and Bulls keep threatening to make changes, but so far everything's been quiet on the free agent and trade fronts. The Blackhawks are plodding along and they'll probably be very good, in a few years. The Bears…are an enigma.

Much of last Sunday I was in a good mood. While the offense struggled, they were playing against one of the best defenses in the league. And the Bears' defense was up to the task, intercepting three passes that produced 13 points. The third quarter ended with the Bears leading 17-7 and it seemed like the team's playoff hopes were still alive. Whether or not the team actually made the playoffs was immaterial, but the way they played, and were coached, would have everything to do with the future of the team.

So to me, the fourth quarter was hugely disappointing. As a fan, I've grown fond of Justin Fields and coach Matt Eberflus. I really wanted them to finish the season strong and get one more year to continue their improvement and eventually bring this proud franchise back to the Super Bowl. Alas, with the loss that day, I think both will be gone next season.

While I completely understand that a little bit of luck is involved, the coaching staff didn't seem to put the Bears in the best position to win. Twice, the team was close enough to try long field goals and twice they decided not to. If they had attempted and made just one of them, the game would have at least gone into overtime.

Justin Fields just seems to be snake bit. A few times Sunday he absolutely looked like the best player on the field. The one coach I would prefer we move on from is Luke Getsy, the offensive coordinator. Under his direction, the Bears offense doesn't seem to have any consistency and Fields keeps taking one step forward and one step back. I'm afraid Fields will never reach his potential if he needs to play under Getsy's system.

The end of the game was heartbreaking. Fields needed to throw a Hail Mary on the final play. Hail Marys hardly ever work, as a matter of fact I can't remember if the Bears ever completed one in my lifetime. So when Fields lofted the ball toward the end zone as the clock was ending the game, I had no hope that a Bear would catch it. About ten guys jumped in the air and the ball was batted around until it started to fall to the ground right to Darnell Mooney, a Bears receiver. As the ball fell into Mooney's lap, for what would have been the winning touchdown, all seemed right in the world. But it looked like Mooney thought it was a hot potato and juggled it into the hands of the enemy. Wait till next year.

I sincerely want to wish everyone happy holidays. Be kind. Talk to you next week. Peace, love, and happiness.

Focusing on yourself is not selfish it's selfless.
— Dino N. Fatouros

High ranked Bobcats feed off Bison

BY STAN MADDUX

The New Buffalo High School boys' basketball team gave it all they had but it was not nearly enough to give the state's No. 5 ranked team in Class C a run for their money.

The Bison (1-5) were defeated at home Tuesday, Dec. 19, by Brandywine 66-33.

The undefeated Bobcats with an obvious advantage in size and athletic ability scored the first eight points before sophomore Lucas Forker nailed a free throw shot for New Buffalo halfway through the first quarter.

The only other first quarter points for the Bison came from senior Elliot Bourne driving in for a short bank shot just before the buzzer.

Bourne scored again early in the second quarter when he drove around defenders in the paint for a lay-up.

Sophomore Nick Haskins later hit a short fade away bank shot and Forker after grabbing an offense rebound placed the ball into the net with less than a minute before halftime, which ended with the Bison trailing 40 to 14.

Bison defenders continued to struggle with the speed and ball movement leading to open shots from the Bobcats, who led 57 to 19 with two minutes left in the third quarter.

Fourth quarter highlights for the Bison included sophomores Nick Haskins and Sam Tripp nailing three point shots.

Forker, who led the team in scoring with 12 points, aggressively took the ball in from the free throw line for a lay-up in the final minute of play.

Head Coach Nate Tripp said the loss would have been a moral victory had the game been much closer against the very talented Bobcats, who have nothing but double digit victories this season.

"We expected to keep it within 20 and that would have been a win," he said.

Guests enjoyed a table full of holiday treats

Members of the royal court sing karaoke at Roma's

The New Buffalo Royal Court sings Christmas carols

The 2024 New Buffalo Royal Court with the box of toys

New Buffalo Royal Court throws a Christmas party for a cause

BY FRANCESCA SAGALA

Members of the New Buffalo Royal Court were back to throwing a party, while also giving to their peers at Christmastime, during their toy drive at Roma's Pizza in New Buffalo Friday, Dec. 15.

Members of the 2024 court, who were just crowned last month, invited members of the community to enjoy pizza, sing karaoke, participate in an "Ugly Sweater Contest" and bring a toy or gift card for a child or teen at New Buffalo Area Schools.

Tracy Tanksley, who co-chairs the New Buffalo Scholarship Pageant with Angela Dupre, said they did the event in 2019 at the former Dooley's restaurant.

"It was so much fun - the kids had a blast, we had a blast and we're really excited to make this an annual event that we want to make sure we do year after year for a great cause," she said.

In addition to the toys and gift cards, an anonymous donor also contributed money. Items were scheduled to be delivered to the schools this week.

Tanksley said that items will be given to Hilary Cunningham, the school district's social worker, who will distribute them to the appropriate families.

"The social worker seems to know the families and have an idea," she said.

Santa makes an appearance at Roma's

Tanksley hopes having court members being a part of the pageant instills in them the spirit of volunteerism. Last month, members shopped at Meijers for Thanksgiving dinner to help two unknown families in the school district for their "Feed a Family" project.

"To me it's about volunteering, helping our community and giving back and being representative in our community and showing our kids how to be leaders and help others and sponsoring events and bringing people together to have a good time," she said.

As part of their year-long reign, members of the court will participate in more community outreach events. Seeing as Miss New Buffalo Audrey Proctor is a fire cadet at the New Buffalo Township Fire Department, it's being planned for members to be at the Friends of New Buffalo Township Fire's annual Fired Up 5K, and the older members to take the plunge for Special Olympics Michigan in February at the Southwest Michigan Polar Plunge. Members will also be at the Public Safety Day in New Buffalo Township in August.

"We want to make this program something really special in our community again - and I think it's already starting to take off and flourish," Tanksley said.

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Miniature church a long-cherished holiday tradition

BY STAN MADDUX

Seeing a mechanical miniature church built as a promise to God remains a tradition at Christmas for some people who saw it as a child in LaPorte.

Chuck Link hadn't seen the Giese Chapel in 60 years but was determined to do so during his trip back to LaPorte for the funeral of his father just six weeks from turning 100.

"I'm glad I did. It brings back a lot of memories," he said.

Link, 70, of Goshen said he was overcome with joy from seeing how well the seven foot high church full of parishioners made of wood still looks and functions.

"I'm elated to see it preserved," he said.

Betty Hildebrandt of LaPorte said her mother and father took her annually to see the church on Christmas Eve while she was growing up in the 1970s.

She gushed about the memories triggered from looking not only at the miniature New England style church but similar looking real churches during her travels.

"To this day, little white churches just mean Christmas to me just because of this church," she said.

According to local historians, Otto Giese spent Christmas in 1944 serving the country in Belgium as a soldier during World War II.

With shells and bombs from the Germans exploding, he quickly made a vow to God if he made it back home alive he would do something to remember and preserve the true spirit of Christmas.

Soon, he found himself in the five week long Battle of the Bulge, the last major German offensive of the war in Europe that led to Germany's defeat.

In 1947, Giese fulfilled his promise by making the church featuring an altar, pulpit, chandeliers, a balcony and pews on the inside.

The exterior has stained glass windows.

Giese placed it on the lawn of his funeral home on Harrison St. where an estimated 10,000 people visited the church during the first holiday season it was on display.

Christmas music played from within the church twice a day every Sunday.

Tiny electric lights were added to the chandeliers the following year.

In 1950, a conveyor system allowing robed wooden choir members holding candles to move down the aisle was added.

He later added a moving pastor made of wood that enters the altar, turns toward the congregation and delivers a sermon.

The voice of the pastor is of the late Ken Coe, once the longtime owner of radio stations WLOI and WCOE in LaPorte.

After retiring in 1978, Giese donated the church to the LaPorte County Historical Society Museum where electrical experts and other professional volunteers keep it maintained.

Giese was 90 when passed away in 2002.

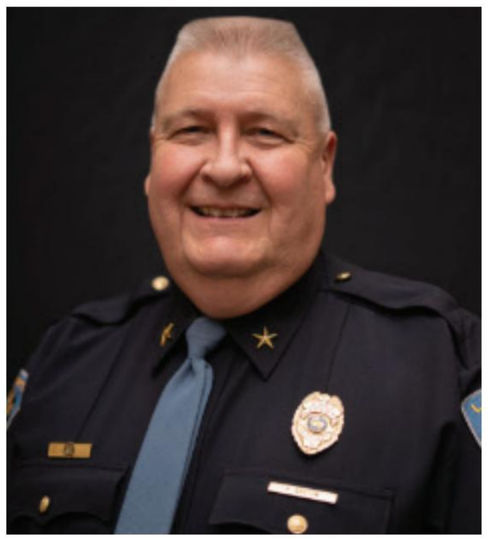
Museum Director Danielle Adams said the church is on display year round but sees the most visitors during the Christmas season.

She remembers seeing the church during a school field trip to the museum in third grade about 16 years ago.

"I thought it was the coolest thing. I loved doll houses and I loved not playing with the dolls. I liked setting them up. This is like that on a huge scale," she said.

LaPorte police chief retiring

BY STAN MADDUX



Paul Brettin planned to retire from law enforcement four years ago but stayed on when asked to serve as chief of police in LaPorte.

He'll be taking off his badge for good now after living up to a promise he made to Mayor Tom Dermody to be the police chief during his first term in office.

Brettin is ending his career where it started nearly 30 years ago as a civilian desk clerk.

He went on to hold almost every position at the department, including chief of detectives, midnight shift commander and member of the street crimes task force.

Brettin said finally deciding to retire was still difficult even though it was in the making before Dermody chose him to lead a revamping of the once depleted force.

"I think I did the changes I wanted to do. Everybody gets to that point in their career that you start to think, you know what? Let the young guys take this over. It was time," he said.

Applications for the position will be accepted through Jan. 12 and the new police chief announced on Feb. 5.

Dermody said whoever is the next chief will have some big shoes to fill.

"Under his watch we have cracked down on drug traffickers and violent offenders, expanded our use of modern technologies, and have made it clear that we are a law-and-order community," Dermody said.

Brettin will remain with the department until May 23 to offer support and guidance to his replacement.

Under Brettin, the department restored its number of officers to more than 40 after manpower dropped to below 30.

Brettin said money provided by the countywide public safety income tax adopted in 2022 provided the city with money to increase salaries enough to help attract more officers to the department.

His other accomplishments include more patrols with utility task vehicles and bicycles powered by electronic motors, prioritized mental health by hiring the city's first-ever Public Safety Social Worker and increased use of modern technology such as drones, FLOCK license plate readers and wireless parking enforcement, Dermody said.

He also created new units like the Emergency Response Team and Proactive Crime Team.

Brettin said he's most proud of the quality of the officers assembled during his tenure as police chief.

"We have amazing officers on the department. These officers are dedicated, every single one of them," he said.

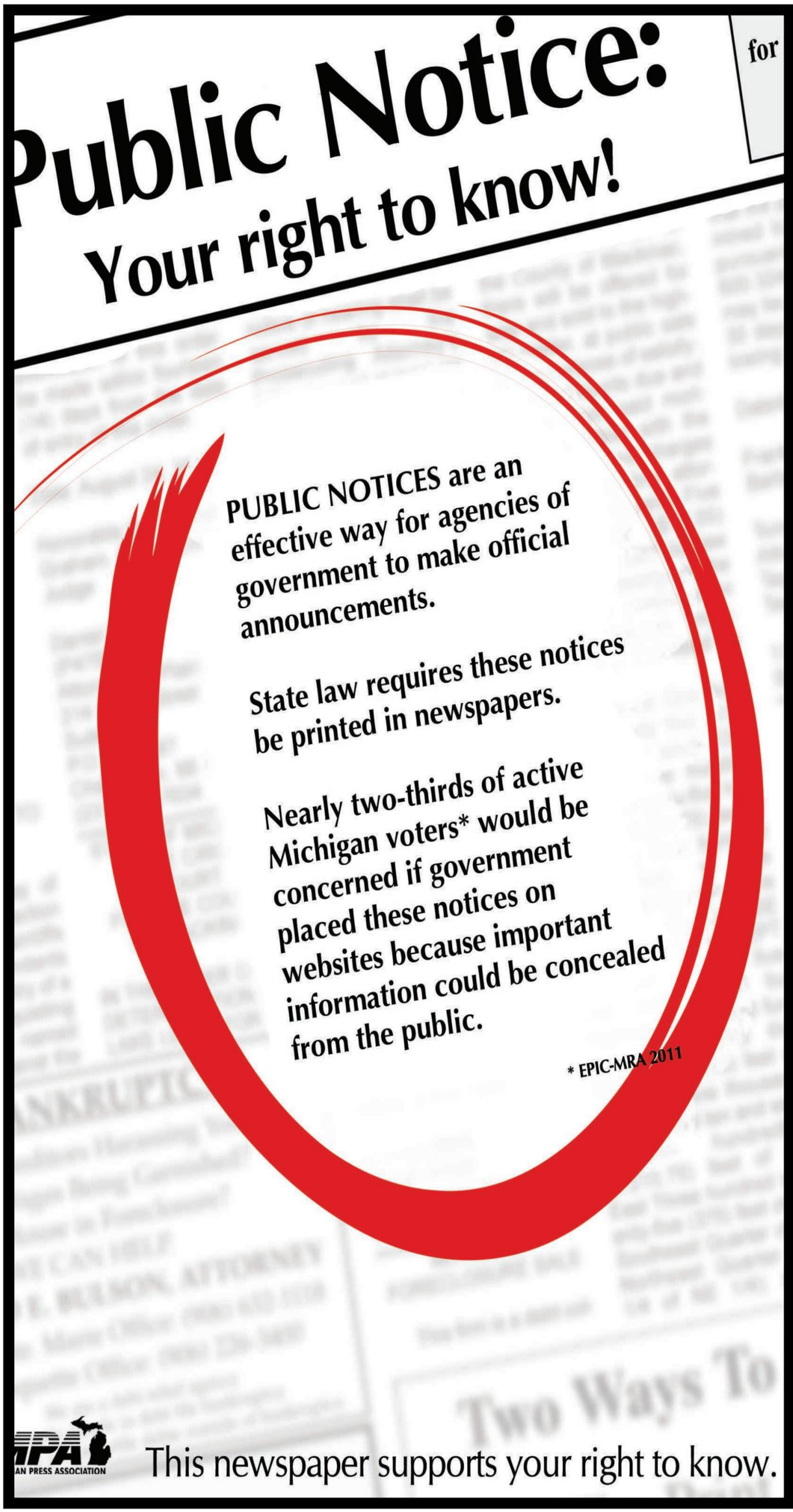
Brettin said he's also equally proud of the modern crime fighting technology added to solve crimes and other matters quicker.

What he'll miss most about law enforcement is the camaraderie he enjoys with his fellow police officers.

"I think there's a brotherhood, sisterhood there that most people don't understand. We see the worst life has to offer and we also see the best but we see more of the negatives. We lean on each other a lot," he said.

Brettin said he plans to keep working but it'll be somewhere outside of law enforcement and spend more time with his family.

"It truly has been an honor to serve this community. Though it was a difficult decision, I am comforted by the fact that I leave behind a team of strong, well-trained, professional officers, who always give 100 percent," he said.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OBITUARIES

John Klute
1945-2023

John Klute, 78, of Three Oaks, died peacefully, Tuesday, December 12, 2023, in the presence of his family.

His life began June 16, 1945, in LaPorte, Indiana the second youngest of five children born to Walter and Margaret Klute.

John loved Disney World; he would take his young kids for a visit almost every year. He attended school at Rolling Prairie High school in 1963. He enjoyed his retirement from American Power Electric. John was an avid snowmobiler and he enjoyed farming and nature.

John will be greatly missed by family and friends. He is survived by one daughter; one son; one grandson, Houghton; one sister, Donna (Victor) Young of Rolling Prairie, Indiana; one brother, Eugene (Nancy) Klute of LaPorte, Indiana; and a host of nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was preceded in death by his parents; one sister, Judy Klute; and one brother, Devon Klute.

The family will observe a private family remembrance.

John will be laid to rest beside his parents and sister in Forest Lawn Cemetery.

The family prefers contributions in memory of John be made to an organization of the donor's choice.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Wagner Family Funerals Pobocik Chapel, Three Oaks. Please share a memory or a message online at www,wagnercares.com.

Kenneth J. "Santa" Przystup
1948-2023

Kenneth J. "Santa" Przystup, 75, of New Buffalo, passed away, Monday, December 11, 2023, at his home.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated 12:00 P.M. on Saturday, December 16, 2023, at St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church, 718 W Buffalo St., New Buffalo, MI. Friends visited with the family beginning at 10:00 A.M. at the Church. Arrangements have been entrusted to Sommerfeld Chapel – 15 North Barton St., New Buffalo, MI. Those wishing to Ken's Memory Book online may do so at www.sommerfeldchapel.com

Ken was born January 3, 1948 in Chicago to Joseph & Edith (Fuchs) Przystup. He graduated from DeLaSalle High School and Rosary College (now Dominican University) both in Forrest Park, IL. On May 26, 1991 he married the former Jeanne Hughes in Park Forrest, IL. Ken retired as dispatcher from General Electric after thirty years of employment. He was a member of St. Mary of the Lake Catholic Church where he served for several years as Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus. He was a volunteer and avid supporter of Reins of Life Therapeutic Horseback Riding in Michigan City and 4 Paws for Ability in Xenia, OH. Ken was best known as Santa in New Buffalo and the surrounding area at many schools and other events during the Christmas Season.

Ken is survived by his wife Jeanne; his daughter Patricia "Trish" Przystup of Lexington, KY; his canine companion Namora; his brother John (Beverly) Przystup of Martinton, IL; niece & nephew-Nicole (Ryan) Kamphuis & Jerome (Katie) Przystup; and his long-time best friend Lawrence (Betty) Mazies of Palos Hills, IL. He was preceded in death by his parents.

A Day in the Life

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

BY LAWRENCE VON EBELER

Sometimes, you have a lousy reputation - and still defeat most panic attacks. Sometimes, you have a good reputation for not panicking easily.

Recently, I invited friends over for a casual, simple Sunday night dinner. I gave them their choice for the hour for which it would be called, with the first couple, Kara and John choosing 5:30. A little early for my choice but it was the night before a work day, so I went along with it. I could not reach the second couple that I was going to invite. After leaving voicemails for them, I forgot about it for a while. Then, I panicked and realized they had never called back to say if they were coming or not. I called John to see if they were maybe winterizing their sailboat or visiting her family in California. He said as far as he knew, they were in town. A few minutes later, they called and accepted the invitation. After a tentative invitation from a couple didn't pan out for them, they called me to say they would accept the invitation. I was sort of relieved because I would've hated doing all that work for one couple.

After doing some writing, I looked up: It was 5:30! I hadn't even lifted a finger yet! While I was standing in the middle of the kitchen and trying to figure out what to do, the first couple walked in. They could see that I was in big trouble and asked what they could do. I got my head going and assigned one of them to light the candles (a high priority), while I threw a roaster together with eight cuts of meat (basted in barbeque sauce and wine), plus potatoes (unpeeled), onion, several vegetables and lots of butter. I threw it in the oven at 350 degrees and hoped it would get done in time to serve dinner.

I thawed out the shrimp for the shrimp cocktail, got out the deviled eggs that I had prepared the day before (thank God) and fixed the shrimp on ice with lemon wedges and mixed the sauce. I asked Gary to start the salad. I started the French Onion soup, which requires some preparation time.

I was wondering: Where's the other couple? Then, the phone rang. It was John, saying they were just leaving for my place. I reminded him that they were supposed to be here 45 minutes ago. His response: "Oh! I thought we were to be there at 6:30!" After I corrected him, he apologized and said they would be right there. I didn't tell him that I was throwing the meal together as we spoke and that I had not started it until a half hour earlier.

Gary finished the salad (since I never got to it). He and Debbie settled in the living room with the wine they brought, the deviled eggs and the shrimp cocktail and crackers. After being prompted by Debbie, I cranked up the music.

By the time Kara and John came, everything was peachy keen. Later, I told them what a madhouse the place had been before they arrived.

Gary was a champ and served the soup, followed by the tossed salad. I served the roaster with several meats in it and potatoes, carrots, celery, onions and the sauce that I threw in along with some wine. Then, I offered to serve ice cream sundaes for dessert. They all refused except for Debbie, who ate hers with great satisfaction.

I totally forgot to offer coffee at the end.

After saying Grace, we ate what was the most mad meal that I have ever served. Considering how everything was thrown together, I can't believe it turned out as well as it did

Now, your Christmas dinner is next!

HOROSCOPE

DECEMBER 21-27, 2023

AS INTERPRETED BY SANDY "STAR" BENDT

ARIES MARCH 21—APRIL 19

Social and religious philosophies may clash in a big way between you and a loved one. Issues from past relationships or family dynamics may still need healing. Situations will arise in a way that forces you to see that you and another may not be as compatible when it comes to the long-term goals.

TAURUS APRIL 20—MAY 20

It is time to deal with any romantic problems in your relationships. Take this opportunity to get to the root of your feelings and be willing to honestly admit how you have played a part in your current romantic situations. Your ability to engage in higher thinking will prove a valuable gift now.

GEMINI MAY 21—JUNE 21

Certain uncomfortable family issues could surface this week putting you in the middle of two opposing siblings, children or lovers. You could be pulled by two strong moral positions that both have valid points. You may be forced to choose before you are certain of outcomes. It's all or nothing, kid.

CANCER JUNE 22—JULY 22

This week you will feel a definite shift in your ideas surrounding closure and moving on. You are changing the way you approach intimate relationships and your refusal to get sucked into unhealthy patterns makes this holiday a very merry one. Stay true to yourself and enjoy outings with friends.

LEO JULY 23—AUGUST 22

Power plays and ego trips could get heavy around that yule tree this season so when it comes to family it is best to keep your opinions to yourself. Be happy with any gifts you receive but when it comes to your love life don't accept second hand treatment. You deserve to be treated with respect.

VIRGO AUGUST 23—SEPTEMBER 22

This is a great week to get out and mingle, just be sure to avoid emotionally charged political and religious conversations. Passions will run quite high this holiday season and it is best to keep them directed to constructive or fun-loving activities. Engage in physically challenging activities instead.

LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23—OCTOBER 22

This Solstice season you could find yourself questioning what things are most essential to your happiness and well-being. Issues or conflicts could force you to see that material and physical objectives have clouded your ability to relax. Arguments can be a catharsis to healing and letting go.

SCORPIO OCTOBER 23—NOVEMBER 21

A strong attraction and heavy chemistry can at times feel fatalistic and conflictive. If you feel a power struggle at work in your relationship it could be because strong feelings are surfacing. Be honest and direct about your expectations and try to rise above saying things that may hurt or wound.

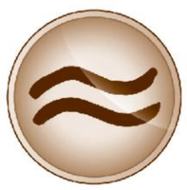
SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 22—DECEMBER 21

Re-budgeting, re-organizing and re-evaluating are all words that play heavy this week. You will be gifted with the opportunity to get in sync with what is really important to your life experience. There are some things that you thought were so integral that serve no purpose now.

CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22—JANUARY 19

Break free from your introspection and self-analysis and stop being down on yourself. You could be feeling bogged down by what others are projecting onto or demanding of you. Stop limiting patterns by accepting the fact that you are a unique expression of divine creation whose purpose is joy.

AQUARIUS JANUARY 20—FEBRUARY 18



Be sure to take time for yourself this week and really be honest with your issues. If you feel isolated or alone, let those emotions out and experience whatever you need to, don't gloss over your needs or expectations by projecting or attacking family. Walk into that dark night and trust the sunrise.

PISCES FEBRUARY 19—MARCH 20

Guard against re-acting to what you perceive family members and loved ones think of each other. Don't be afraid to be yourself in any family situations and by all means necessary use your ability to not let situations and conversations get too heavy. Keep things light and cheery this season.

Love is the attempt to form a friendship inspired by beauty.
— Marcus Tullius Cicero

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Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9.

5		7				2		
	9					4		
2		3			9		5	8
8				2		9	4	
	1	9		7				
	8				5		3	
		5	4	3			2	
				9	7	5		

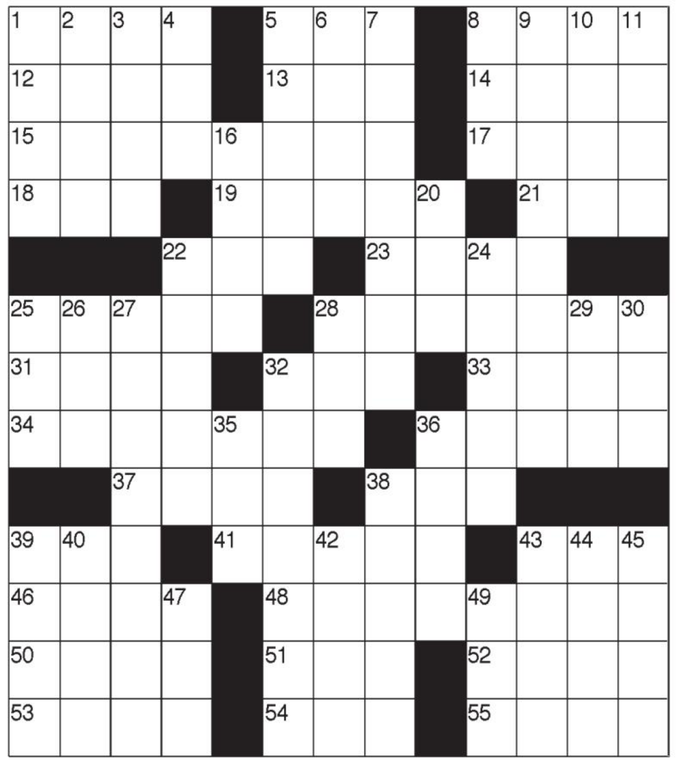
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS

1 Molding
5 Carriage
8 Sister of Ares
12 Pillage
13 Iodine (pref.)
14 Moses death mountain
15 Premature (2 words)
17 Arabic letter
18 Building wing
19 Small anvil
21 Adjective-forming (suf.)
22 Troops
23 P.I. skirt
25 Song thrush
28 Relaxing of state tensions
31 Seed coat
32 Pasha
33 Academy (abbr.)
34 Stir
36 Macerate
37 Woman's work basket
38 Eth. prince
39 Presidential nickname
41 Refuse
43 Exudate plant
46 Rhine tributary
48 Turco
50 Thunderfish
51 Teacher of Samuel
52 River through Florence and Pisa
53 Fr. pronoun
54 Ancient times
55 Pair

DOWN

1 Bone: Gr.
2 Prison: Brit.
3 Ecology (abbr.)
4 Barely get by
5 Odyssey singer
6 Portion out
7 Epic by Homer
8 Alfonso's queen
9 Trust
10 Bird
11 Mild
16 Sweetsop
20 Knot lace
22 Temporary jungle clearing
24 Irish poet
25 Fr. month
26 Scot. alder tree
27 Inner
28 River into the North Sea
29 To (Scot.)
30 Electronic data processing (abbr.)
32 Conscript
35 Kwa language
36 Hall (Sp.)
38 Quick
39 Berne's river
40 Semitic deity
42 False hair
43 Bloodcurdling
44 Arm bone
45 Tone
47 Gelderland city
49 Computer assisted design (abbr.)



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Arrest of wanted man follows chase

BY STAN MADDUX

A fugitive was captured following a short high-speed chase in Michigan City of the man claiming to be homeless.

Rick Wheelden, 28, was clocked at 82 miles per hour on Indiana 212 last week.

On Dec. 8, a traffic stop was attempted on Freyer Road but Wheelden kept going at high speeds and was on Haack Road before coming to a sudden stop in the parking lot of a business, police said.

He was ordered out of the vehicle at gunpoint.

Police said Wheelden, whose former address is in Michigan City, told the officer he was currently living in a tent.

According to court documents, Wheelden was taken into custody on an outstanding warrant for intimidation.

That charge alleges Wheelden in early October angrily grabbed a pipe and threatened to strike a woman with it if she didn't stop talking on the phone.

Police said he also threatened to shoot the woman then lifted up his shirt to show her a gun he had in his waistband.

Court documents also revealed Wheelden told the officer after the brief pursuit he used crack cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana the previous night.

Single vehicle crash results in two injuries

BY STAN MADDUX

A Hudson Lake man is accused of driving impaired following a single vehicle crash into a tree that injured both occupants in northern LaPorte County.

Travis Wlodarek, 32, is charged with operating while intoxicated.

According to La Porte County Police, the collision happened after 9 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15, on 1000 North near 300 East.

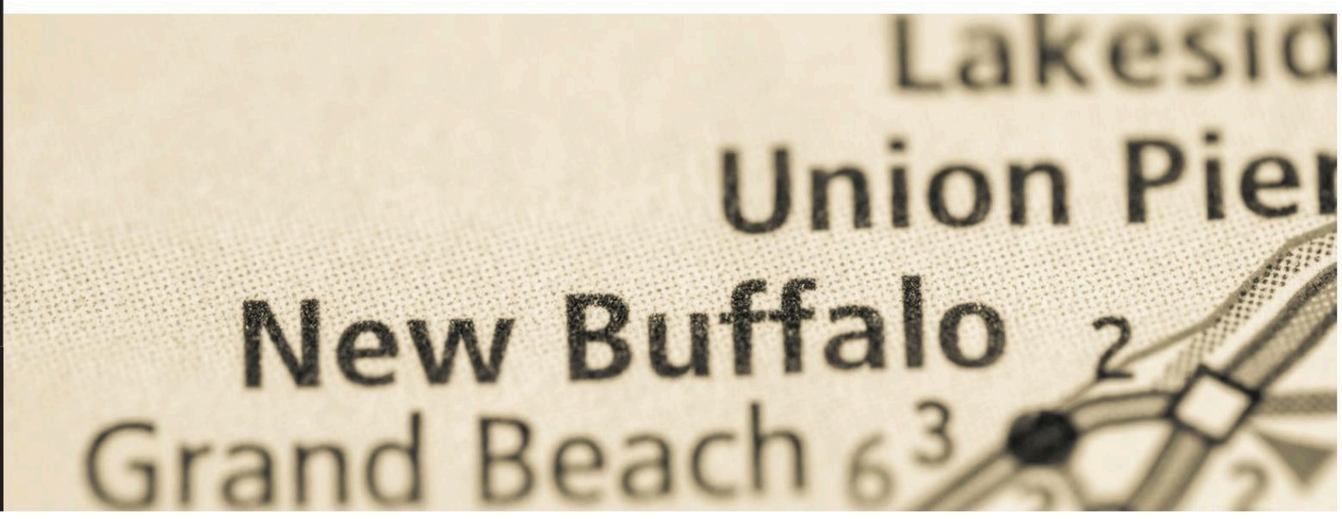
Police said Wlodarek explained he struck the tree after swerving to avoid striking a deer.

The investigation showed he and his passenger, Jade Nelson, were returning home from a Christmas party before the crash.

Wlodarek suffered a broken nose while Nelson wound up with a fractured sternum.

Police said Wlodarek had a blood alcohol level more than two times the .08 percent legal limit.

The 2007 Chrysler 300 he was driving sustained heavy front end damage.



OWI arrest in stop of zig zagging moped

BY STAN MADDUX

An elderly man veering completely off the road multiple times on a moped in rural La Porte County is facing charges of operating while intoxicated.

Allen Blake, 71, of Kingsford Heights could receive an up to one year jail sentence on the Class A misdemeanor offense.

La Porte County Police said a patrol officer on Friday, Dec. 15, was traveling on 850 South near Union Mills when a moped ahead of him kept swerving back and forth over the center line.

On several occasions, police said the moped went completely off the road by about 15 feet into some grass before returning to the pavement.

Blake told the officer he was making the about six mile drive home from a bar where he had "a couple of beers."

According to police, Blake before and after removing his goggles exhibited symptoms of being impaired such as difficulty standing along with red and watery eyes.

He was taken into custody after a certified breathalyzer test revealed a .137-percent blood alcohol level, police said.

Blake was released from the La Porte County Jail to await the outcome of the case after posting $200 cash bond.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF CANCELED MEETING
DECEMBER 25, 2023

Please take notice that the meeting of December 25, 2023, of the Board of Education of New Buffalo Area Schools, New Buffalo, Michigan has been canceled.

Date of canceled meeting:
December 25, 2023
Place of meeting: MS/HS Cafeteria
Hour of meeting: 6:00 pm

Telephone number of Principal Office of Board of Education:
269 469-6010

Board minutes are located at the Principal Office of the Board of Education:
1112 E. Clay St
New Buffalo, ML 49117

LISA WERNER, PRESIDENT
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Berrien County Sheriff's Office holds 'Shop with a Cop'

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office held their annual "Shop with A Cop" program at the Niles area Walmart, followed by Christmas present wrapping with Santa Claus at the Michiana Christian Embassy Church in Niles, Saturday Dec. 9.

Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit Sergeant Kimberly Fedison spent countless volunteer hours organizing this event. including obtaining donations to cover the costs.

In 2023, the Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit partnered with the Berrien County Sheriff's Office Chaplains, the Saint Joseph City Department of Public Safety, the Southwest Michigan Boys & Girls Club and Berrien County Sheriff's Office Enforcement Division to make the 2023 "Shop with a Cop" program a success.

For this year's event, the Berrien County Sheriff's Office. along with the partner agencies and organizations, were able to assist five families and 21 children by allowing the children to shop for Christmas gifts for themselves, their family members, and their friends.

In addition to providing the funding to allow the children to shop, the Berrien County Sheriff's Office received enough donations specific to this event to provide each family with a holiday food basket, and special gift cards presented to each of the families at the end of the event to further enjoy a wonderful holiday meal when they get home and have a wonderful holiday celebration with gifts under the tree, as well as to purchase a "special gift" for their entire families to enjoy.

The "shopping" consisted of the families and children being adopted by law enforcement officers and then proceeding through the entire Walmart store to select and purchase the gifts they desired for themselves and their loved ones.

Several businesses and civic organizations donated money, goods, and services to this function. Without the following donations, the Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit along with the partner agencies and organizations would not have been able to assist the five families and their children: Niles Area Walmart, Subway at the Niles Wal-Mart, Michiana Christian Embassy, Milano Pizza of Niles, Friends for Berrien Springs, LECO Corporation, Antibus Scales & Systems, Wightman Architecture & Design, RedBud MX - Redbud Recreation Inc., Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit, Santa Vin Haislip and numerous anonymous donations.

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit Deputies take great pride in assisting families that need assistance especially during the holiday season. The smiles of gratitude on the faces of these children and the "hugs" provided by the adults and children to the deputies and officers are something that they will also remember and cherish. A special thank you goes to Santa Vin Haislip for making this event even more spectacular.

Sheriff L. Paul Bailey and the administrative staff at the Berrien County Sheriff's Office are extremely proud of the efforts put forth by the Berrien County Sheriff's Office Reserve Unit for this wonderful cause as well as all the volunteer hours they donate to the County of Berrien and the local communities throughout the year to ensure that the county, the local communities and the surrounding areas are wonderful places to reside and visit.

The Berrien County Sheriff's Office Personnel and all local law enforcement and first responders are proud to serve and protect their communities daily, as well as to be able to provide support to individuals when they need assistance.

The members of the Berrien County Sheriff's Office, the Saint Joseph Department of Public Safety, and the Southwest Michigan Boys & Girls Club wish everyone "Peace and Joy" this holiday season. — STAFF REPORTS

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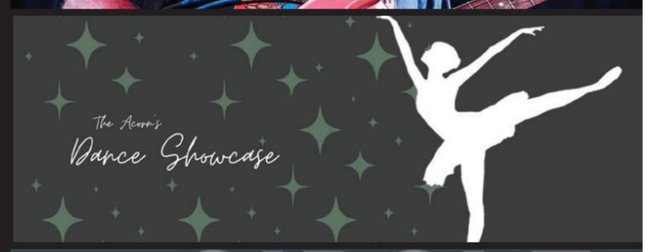

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